

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A washing machine, comprising:
 - a housing;
 - a tub installed in the housing and configured to hold washing fluid therein;
 - a drum rotatably installed in the tub and configured to hold laundry items therein;and
 - a fluid level sensing apparatus configured to sense a washing fluid level and to provide an appropriate washing fluid level for each of a plurality of washing steps, the fluid level sensing apparatus comprising:
 - an air chamber configured to be installed in communication with the tub, wherein the air chamber is configured to store a predetermined amount of air such that a pressure of the washing fluid held in the tub imposes a corresponding pressure on the stored air;
 - a tube configured to be installed in communication with the air chamber;
 - a sensor coupled to the tube and configured to sense a washing fluid level by sensing an air pressure in the tube; and
 - a protecting member configured to prevent ~~disassembly or~~ breakage of the air chamber and the tube, or disassembly of the air chamber from the tube.

2. (Previously Presented) The washing machine as claimed in claim 1, wherein the air chamber is configured to be connected to a drainpipe which extends from the tub for discharging washing fluid.
3. (Previously Presented) The washing machine as claimed in claim 2, wherein the air chamber is configured to be connected to a drain extension pipe which extends from the drainpipe.
4. (Previously Presented) The washing machine as claimed in claim 1, wherein the tube is configured to be connected to an air extension pipe which extends from the air chamber.
5. (Previously Presented) The washing machine as claimed in claim 1, wherein the protecting member is configured to enclose a connecting portion formed between the air chamber and the tube.
6. (Previously Presented) The washing machine as claimed in claim 1, wherein the protecting member comprises a rib extending from the air chamber, wherein the rib is configured to enclose a connecting portion formed between the air chamber and the tube.

7. (Previously Presented) The washing machine as claimed in claim 6, wherein the rib is substantially cylindrical.
8. (Previously Presented) The washing machine as claimed in claim 6, wherein the rib extends beyond the connecting portion.
9. (Previously Presented) The washing machine as claimed in claim 1, wherein the protecting member is configured to attach the air chamber to a peripheral part of the washing machine.
10. (Previously Presented) The washing machine as claimed in claim 9, wherein the protecting member comprises a boss which extends from an outer surface of the tub and a flange which extends from an outer surface of the air chamber, wherein the flange is configured to be coupled to the boss so as to attach the air chamber to the outer surface of the tub.
11. (Previously Presented) The washing machine as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a control apparatus configured to control a supply and a discharge of washing fluid based on the sensed washing fluid level from the fluid level sensing apparatus.
12. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for sensing a fluid level of a washing machine, the apparatus comprising:

an air chamber configured to be installed in communication with a tub which holds washing fluid, wherein the air chamber is configured to store a predetermined amount of air such that a pressure of the washing fluid held in the tub imposes a corresponding pressure on the stored air;

a tube configured to be installed in communication with the air chamber;

a sensor coupled to the tube and configured to sense a washing fluid level by sensing an air pressure in the tube; and

a protecting member configured to prevent ~~disassembly or~~ breakage of the air chamber and the tube, or disassembly of the air chamber from the tube.

13. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the air chamber is configured to be connected to a drainpipe which extends from the tub for discharging washing fluid.

14. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as claimed in claim 13, wherein the air chamber is configured to be connected to a drain extension pipe which extends from the drainpipe.

15. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the tube is configured to be connected to an air extension pipe which extends from the air chamber.

Reply to Office Action of November 1, 2006

16. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the protecting member comprises a rib extending from the air chamber and configured to enclose a connecting portion formed between the air chamber and the tube.
17. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as claimed in claim 16, wherein the rib is substantially cylindrical.
18. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as claimed in claim 16, wherein the rib extends beyond the connecting portion.
19. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the protecting member is configured to attach the air chamber to a peripheral part of the washing machine.
20. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as claimed in claim 19, wherein the protecting member comprises a boss which extends from an outer surface of a tub and a flange which extends from an outer surface of the air chamber, wherein the flange is configured to be coupled to the boss.
21. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein the protecting member further comprises a substantially cylindrical rib extending from an end of the

air chamber which is configured to enclose a connecting portion formed between the air chamber and the tube.

22. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein the boss and the flange are configured to prevent contact between the air chamber and the tub when coupled.

23. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as claimed in claim 22, wherein the boss and the flange are configured to maintain a predetermined position of the air chamber relative to the tub when coupled.

24. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as claimed in claim 22, wherein the boss and the flange are configured to maintain a predetermined distance between the air chamber and the tub when coupled.

25. (Previously Presented) The washing machine as claimed in claim 4, wherein the air extension pipe extends from an end of the air chamber which is opposite an end of the air chamber connected to the tub by a drainpipe, wherein the air extension pipe and an end of the tube connected thereto form a connecting portion which is enclosed by a substantially cylindrical rib portion of the protecting member.

26. (Previously Presented) The washing machine as claimed in claim 10, wherein the protecting member further comprises a substantially cylindrical rib extending from an end of the air chamber which is configured to enclose a connecting portion formed between the air chamber and the tube.,

27. (Previously Presented) A washing machine comprising the apparatus of claim 12.